



SEATTLE SYMPHONY 2009-2010 SEASON

GERARD SCHWARZ, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Thursday, April 29, 2010, at 7:30pm

Saturday, May 1, 2010, at 8pm

Sunday, May 2, 2010, at 2pm

MASTERWORKS SEASON

ROBERT SPANO CONDUCTS RACHMANINOV'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2

Robert Spano, conductor

Dejan Lazić, piano

Seattle Symphony

JEAN SIBELIUS

Pohjola's Daughter, Op. 49

SERGEY RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

Moderato

Adagio sostenuto

Allegro scherzando

Dejan Lazić, piano

INTERMISSION

JOHN ADAMS

Harmonielehre

Part I

Part II – The Anfortas Wound

Part III – Meister Eckhardt and Quackie

Thursday's concert is sponsored by Microsoft.

Talk Music speaker one hour prior to performance

Title: "John Adams' *Harmonielehre*: Moving into the Future by Re-envisioning the Past"

Lecturer: Sarah Grace Shewbert, University of Washington Doctoral Student

Ask the Artist featuring Robert Spano on Saturday, May 1, following the concert.

Please disconnect all cell phones, signal watches and pagers. Thank you. All programs and artists are subject to change.

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GUEST CONDUCTOR

Robert Spano



Critics Say:

"Robert Spano has that great skill in a conductor of making every performance radiate joy."
(*The New York Times*)

Professional

Appointments: Spano is now in his ninth season as Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO). Previous appointments include Music Director of the Ojai Festival; Director of the Festival of Contemporary Music at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Music Center; and Music Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

2009-2010 Season Highlights: In addition to his work in Atlanta, Spano will conduct the Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, St. Louis and Toronto symphony orchestras, as well as the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He also will participate in the Aspen Music Festival and conduct Verdi's *Otello* at the Cincinnati Opera.

Forté: One of the most innovative and imaginative conductors of his generation, Spano is committed to nurturing and championing new works. This season, he will lead the ASO in five world premieres, including Angel Lam's *Awakening from a Disappearing Garden* for Cello and Orchestra, with Yo-Yo Ma as soloist.

Recordings: Include numerous albums with the ASO on the Telarc label; recent releases include a live album of *La Bohème* and the Grammy Award-winning recordings of Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* and Berlioz's *Requiem*. Spano and the ASO also recently released two works of music by Osvaldo Golijov for Deutsche Grammophon.

Awards: Include *Musical America's* 2008 Conductor of the Year Award.

Background: Spano currently serves on the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory, and has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, the Curtis Institute of Music and Emory University. He makes his home in Atlanta.

GUEST ARTIST

Dejan Lazić
Piano



Critics Say:

"A brilliant pianist and a gifted musician full of ideas and able to project them persuasively."

(*Gramophone*)

2009–2010 Season

Highlights: Include a tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra; engagements with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, MDR Leipzig Orchestra Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo and Pacific Symphony; and his debut with NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo. He also will give recitals in Istanbul, Munich and Heidelberg.

Recordings: Lazić records exclusively for Channel Classics. The first volume of his *Liaisons* series, featuring works by Scarlatti and Bartók, was released in 2007; the second, an album of Schumann and Brahms, followed in early 2009. In 2008, he released a recording of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Kirill Petrenko.

Collaborations: A passionate chamber musician, Lazić frequently collaborates with artists including Benjamin Schmid, Gordan Nikolić and Richard Tognetti, and is a regular guest at the Menuhin Festival Gstaad, among others.

Background: Born in Zagreb, Croatia, Lazić grew up in Salzburg, Austria, where he studied at the Mozarteum. In addition to his solo career, Lazić is a composer whose works include various piano, chamber and orchestral compositions. His piano cycle *Kinderszenen: Hommage à Schumann* was premiered at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and his arrangement of Brahms' Violin Concerto for piano and orchestra saw its world premiere with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony in 2009.

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On behalf of Microsoft and our employees in the Puget Sound area, we want to thank Seattle Symphony for enriching our community.

Sincerely,

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Corporate Vice President,
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PROGRAM

Notes in Brief

The initial half of our concert is devoted to music from the first decade of the 20th century. Each of the two pieces we hear exemplifies, in its own way, the late stage of musical Romanticism, a fascinating moment just before the musical precepts of the 19th century were swept away in the modernist revolution.

Jean Sibelius' tone poem *Pohjola's Daughter*, Op. 49, is one of many works this composer wrote under the influence of the *Kalevala*, Finland's great folk legend. Its music evokes the encounter between the hero Väinämöinen and a beautiful maiden who checks his romantic advances by posing three impossible tasks.

Sergey Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor exemplifies Russian Romanticism at its most ripe. The music is replete with memorable melodies — so much so that some of them were appropriated for popular songs. But the concerto also impresses with its virtuoso solo part, which Rachmaninov, one of the great pianists of his era, tailored to his own formidable abilities.

Although composed eight decades later, John Adams' *Harmonielehre* harks back to the turn-of-the-century musical idiom of Sibelius and his contemporaries. Rejecting the angular musical abstraction of mid-20th-century high modernism, Adams reclaimed the rich harmonic palette of the late-Romantics and combined this with the pulsating rhythms and colorful orchestration that have become his signature traits.

NOTES by Paul Schiavo

JEAN SIBELIUS

Pohjola's Daughter, Op. 49

Born: December 8, 1865, in Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957, in Järvenpää, Finland

Work composed: 1906

World premiere: December 29, 1906, in St. Petersburg, by the Mariinsky Theater Orchestra; Sibelius conducting

Like many composers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jean Sibelius was strongly influenced by the spirit of nationalism that swept much of Europe during his lifetime. The composer had been little touched by nationalist sentiments during his student and apprentice years, most of which he spent in Berlin and Vienna, trying to absorb the style and outlook of German Romanticism. But upon returning to his native Finland, in 1891, Sibelius was swept up in the spirit of patriotism engendered by his country's struggle against Russian domination. Immersing himself in Finnish folklore, he discovered a new and particularly rich source of inspiration in the *Kalevala*, Finland's epic folk legend.

During the years around the turn of the century, Sibelius wrote several major pieces based on episodes from the *Kalevala*. Among them were an aborted opera entitled *Veneen Luominen* ("The Building of the Boat"); the four orchestral *Legends*; a quartet of tone poems that includes *The Swan of Tuonela*, one of the most popular of all Sibelius' compositions; and *Pohjola's Daughter*, which opens our program.

Composed in 1906, *Pohjola's Daughter* is a tone poem that relates in musical terms one of the more poetic episodes of the *Kalevala*. This concerns the hero Väinämöinen on a journey by sleigh through Pohjola, the land of the far north. There he encounters an enchanted maiden sitting astride a rainbow, working at a spinning wheel. Dazzled by her beauty, Väinämöinen attempts

to woo her, but she thwarts him by setting a series of impossible tasks. These include tying an egg into knots, building a ship from fragments of a broken spindle, then launching the vessel without touching it. The hero attempts valiantly to accomplish these tasks, but in the end he is forced to admit defeat and rides off alone.

Sibelius' representation of these events takes the form of a single movement whose main themes signify Väinämöinen and the mysterious woman. The tone poem opens with an introduction in slow tempo, its music conveying the impression of a mist-shrouded, primeval atmosphere. At length, more animated figures sound in the woodwinds, and the music gains momentum. The woodwind lines become a running theme — emblematic, no doubt, of Väinämöinen on his journey — and soon we encounter the hero unmistakably in the form of a mighty brass fanfare. By contrast, the musical depiction of the magical woman runs to sensuous impressionism, with trilling flutes and languorous harp arpeggios creating a luminous texture.

The central portion of the piece brings passages of diverse but mostly dramatic character, which mirror Väinämöinen's increasingly desperate efforts to perform the tasks posed by the maiden. Sibelius then offers a reprise of the main thematic ideas, followed by a coda in which spare music for the strings suggests the defeated hero returning sadly toward home.

Scored for 2 flutes and piccolo; 2 oboes and English horn; 2 clarinets and bass clarinet; 2 bassoons and contrabassoon; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, harp and strings.

SERGEY RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

Born: April 1, 1873, in Novgorod, Russia

Died: March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California

Work composed: 1901

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PROGRAM NOTES continued

World premiere: November 9, 1901, in Moscow, by the Moscow Philharmonic Society Orchestra; Rachmaninov at the keyboard; Alexander Siloti conducting

Few musical careers started so hopefully or stalled so suddenly as that of Sergey Rachmaninov. An extraordinary prodigy, Rachmaninov entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at age 9 and wrote his first orchestral composition when he was 14. By the time he was 20, he had completed a piano concerto, an opera and a number of keyboard works, including the famous Prelude in C-sharp minor. The stage seemed set for a lifetime of musical accomplishment.

But in 1897, Rachmaninov's First Symphony, with which he hoped to establish a major reputation, failed dismally. Cesar Cui, a noted composer and critic, likened the music to the product of "a conservatory in hell." Other commentators were not much kinder. Rachmaninov was crushed. He composed nothing during the next three years and became so despondent that his friends worried for his health.

Finally, in 1900, the composer was persuaded to visit Nicolai Dahl, a doctor specializing in treatment by hypnosis. In his memoirs, Rachmaninov recalled the treatment this way: "Day after day I heard the same hypnotic formula while I lay half asleep in Dahl's armchair: 'You will begin to write your concerto. You will work with great ease. The music will be excellent.'"

Dahl's work must be counted the greatest psychiatric success in the history of music. In a short time Rachmaninov was again composing, completing his Second Piano Concerto, a work that stands among his most popular compositions. Its success is no surprise. The concerto is supremely melodious, so much so that some of its themes have been used for popular songs. (The concerto itself has served as the soundtrack to several films.)

The first of Rachmaninov's captivating melodies is heard in the strings

following a brief introduction of pensive chords on the piano. Its soulful character seems distinctly Russian, and it is both contrasted and complemented by the romantic tenderness of a second theme, set forth by the soloist. Both melodies are varied and transformed as the first movement unfolds.

The ensuing *Adagio sostenuto* opens on a note of almost religious tranquility, after which the piano provides delicate accompaniment to a dream-like melody set forth by flute and clarinet. Toward the end of the movement there is a flurry of keyboard activity, culminating in a brief cadenza for the soloist, but the music soon returns to the gentle reverie of the opening.

A march-like introduction in the orchestra and glistening figuration in the piano precede the statement of the first subject of the finale. But Rachmaninov has saved his trump card, a sensuous melody presently stated by the orchestra. This theme, which in the 1940s became familiar to millions as the hit song "Full Moon and Empty Arms," returns after an extensive development of the first subject to bring the concerto to an ecstatic close.

Scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion and strings.

JOHN ADAMS

Harmonielehre

Born: February 15, 1947, in Worcester, Massachusetts

Now lives: Berkeley, California

Work composed: 1984-85

World premiere: March 21, 1985, in San Francisco, by the San Francisco Symphony; Edo de Waart conducting

With so much of the orchestral repertory given over to great works of the past, it often is difficult for present-day composers to get noticed. One who has is John Adams. During the past

three decades, this California-based musician has produced a substantial and varied body of work, much of it for orchestra. His compositions have brought their author a Pulitzer Prize, the prestigious Grawemeyer Prize (sometimes described as the "Nobel Prize for music"), and the distinction of being the most frequently performed of living American composers. Even more impressive, they have won over many listeners who normally approach new music with some skepticism.

Adams broke early in his career from the arcane procedures for writing atonal music that characterized modernism in the 1950s and '60s. Initially drawn to the techniques of a group of American outsiders whose style became known, by analogy with trends in painting and sculpture, as "minimalism," Adams evolved steadily in during the 1980s and '90s, developing an idiom that combined repeating motifs, rhythmic pulsation and static or slow-moving harmonies — all signature minimalist devices — with colorful orchestration, a wide range of expressive nuance, and a rich harmonic vocabulary. He thereby created what some commentators have described as a "post-minimalist" style, one that has proven complex, flexible and fertile. Its rhythmic vitality marks it as contemporary American; its harmonic language entails echoes of the Romantic era.

That last trait is particularly evident in *Harmonielehre*, composed in 1984-85. Its title derives from a famous book of the same name by the Austrian composer Arnold Schönberg. In his late work, Schönberg became an apostle of the sort of atonal modernity that once alienated many listeners from new music. But his early compositions belong to the twilight of Romanticism, with its lush, expressive and sometimes tantalizingly ambiguous harmonic palette. It is that harmonic language, current around the start of the 20th century, that Adams set out to reclaim in *Harmonielehre*. "It is a large, three-movement work for

The opening movement begins with pounding chords and pulsating figures in the classic minimalist manner before turning to more lyrical expression in a long central episode. A brief reprise of the opening material rounds off this initial portion of the work.

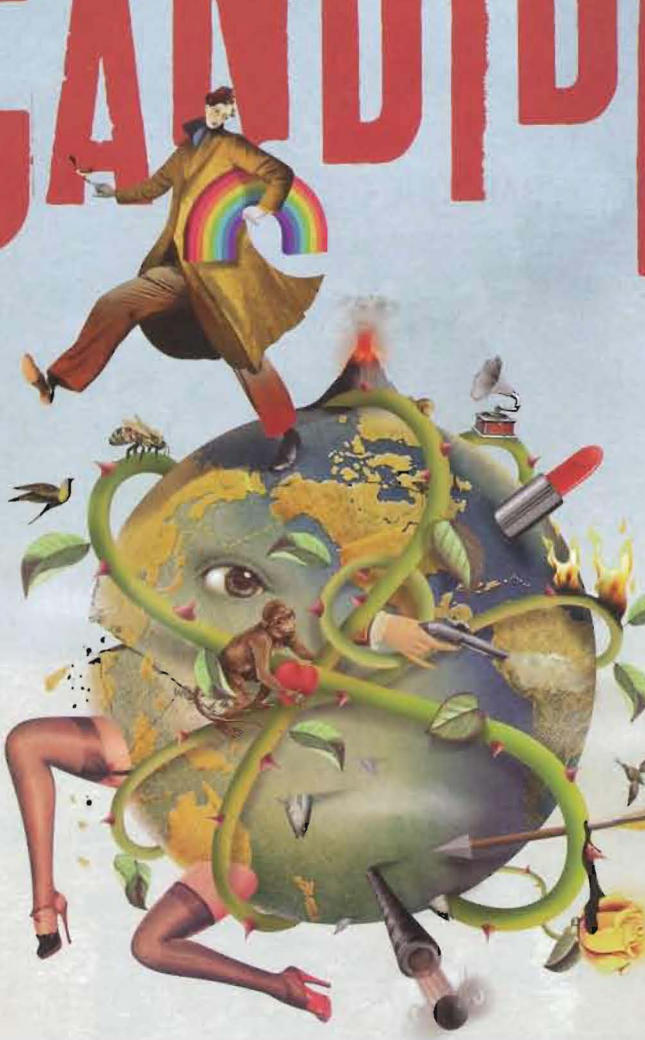
Adams explains that he was intently studying the writings of Carl Jung at the time he composed *Harmonielehre* and was particularly impressed by the psychologist's discussion of the legend of King Anfortas and his wound that will not heal. (Opera-goers, especially in Seattle, will recall this tale in connection with Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*.) The second movement captures the melancholy spirit of the Anfortas story.

As for the finale, it derives, Adams explains, from a dream in which he imagined his infant daughter, then called "Quackie," floating in the heavens while perched on the shoulders of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhardt. This movement opens, appropriately, with a cradle song but gathers energy and momentum as it builds to a climactic conclusion.

Scored for 4 flutes, the second, third and fourth doubling on piccolo; 3 oboes, the third doubling on English horn; 3 clarinets and bass clarinet, the third clarinet doubling on second bass clarinet; 3 bassoons and contrabassoon; 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones and 2 tubas; timpani and percussion; 2 harps, celeste, piano and strings.

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